

Jones Rob

From: Gary.S.Medina@uscg.mil on behalf of Medina, Gary S MSSE2 <Gary.S.Medina@uscg.mil>
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2013 4:24 PM
To: Jones Rob
Subject: FW: Suspected Cause of the Safari Spirit Fire

Rob,
Here is an e mail I got today from the person in charge of the Safari Spirit. Please let me know if there is anything else

[REDACTED]

Gary, Thanks for the call today. Below is the e-mail I sent to our staff in July of this year...this outlines what I learned about the cause of the fire aboard the Safari Spirit. If I find any other documentation from the forensic company/Craig I will forward to you.

Katie Wixom is our Safety Officer and has access to the drug test results for myself and Steve Eagleston. Katie, will you dig into your files and scan the drug test results and forward to Gary.

Best regards,

Dan Blanchard

[REDACTED]

All who care to learn,

Most of you are aware that forensic experts have been working for the insurance underwriter in hopes of determining the cause of the fire that took place on April 27th aboard the Safari Spirit. Unfortunately I am not privy to the data that the forensic experts submitted to the underwriter and the USCG. However I have talked with the lead forensic investigator and have learned enough to feel comfortable with sending you this message.

He stated to me that there is "no smoking gun" that shows without doubt what caused the fire. However, there are many things that were ruled out such as electrical faults, vapor explosion etc. He feels that his conclusion as to the source of ignition is more probable than not.

There is little question that the fire started on the aft starboard outer deck seat just inboard of the steps that lead to the aft uncovered deck. This is the location where the contractor applying the Teak Oil had stored his supplies when he departed the boat after the day's work was completed on April 26th. This also agrees with my own estimation (having been aboard during the fire) as to the source area.

I was in attendance on the days when forensic experts removed the collapsed deck, the launch, layers of ash and burned out items from the aft deck seats aboard the Safari Spirit. At the base of the seat several rags were found. Tests on these rags revealed the presence of products that most likely "self heated" and eventually spontaneously combusted and started the fire. Right next to these rags were several one gallon cans of flammable materials, it is believed that these did not contain the Teak Oil product, but rather other thinners. No other rollers, brushes or other application devices that would typically be used in the application of teak oil were found aboard. I learned from the lead forensic expert that Teak Oil contains Tongue Oil, which is 25 times more likely to "self heat" and later spontaneously combust than other typical oils.

There was no physical evidence found aboard the Safari Spirit to support the idea that foul play was involved in this event.

With this information we need to continue our attention to flammable product storage and proper disposal of application devices and rags when a job is completed. All application devices and used rags must be removed from the vessel and properly disposed of in steel receptacles. Ask yourself these questions...

- 1) Is your ship's flammable storage adequate? Oils, thinners and spray cans are big concerns; organic paints are a hazard, but not nearly to the extent of oils and thinners typically used on our vessels.
- 2) Is your flammable storage on deck and away from other combustible materials?
- 3) Do you really need these products aboard? Can you simply purchase as needed and remove from the vessel? Can you buy a pint or a quart rather than a gal or even a 5 gal container? No reason to keep a half empty quart can of thinner aboard...dispose of it.
- 4) Are crews that apply these products fully aware of how dangerous they really are? Are they educated on the dangers of spontaneous combustion?

5) Are the storage areas for products like paint, oils, gasoline and thinners kept VERY CLEAN and free of clutter and other easily combustible materials?

On a personal note...I am very fortunate to have lived thru this fire and it has changed the way I view every home, office or boat I visit. I often find myself sitting in a friend's home and wondering what products are in the basement waiting to light up the wood structure like a torch. So please, let this be a lesson for our work life and your home life. PLEASE, PLEASE take inventory of oils, gasoline, thinners, paints and other flammable household products and how they are stored and disposed of in your own home. Let's count this as a close call not just for me, but a wake-up call for all of us.

Happy to be with you,

Dan B